

By Cdr. Peter B. Mersky, USNR (Ret.)

Faltum, Andrew. *The Essex Aircraft Carriers*. Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 8 W. Madison St., Baltimore, MD 21201. 1996. 216 pp. Ill. \$39.95.

This new book about this important class of carriers is well printed and well illustrated, with good photo reproduction. Although Faltum does give design and construction details of the *Essex* class, his book is more of a condensed history of American carrier aviation in WW II, Korea and Vietnam, and the role of these CVs in those conflicts.

The first chapters provide a brief outline of carrier design and layout and are followed by a similar survey of 1941-era training, carrier life and organization. Succeeding chapters deal with the ships' careers in war and peace, including their highly publicized role as capsule retrievers during the early days of America's space program. There are the inevitable typos and occasional errors, such as stating on page 145 that the Navy's first MiG-21 kill in Vietnam was credited to an F-8 from *Intrepid* (CV 11). Actually, the October 1966 score went to Commander Dick Bellinger, VF-162 CO, on board *Oriskany* (CV 34). An *Intrepid* F-8 got the **last** *Crusader* victory, over a MiG-21 in September 1968.

However, this book is a good single-volume description of what might be considered one of the primary weapons of the last two years of WW II, and a system that certainly gave the U.S. taxpayers their money's worth.

If you would like to learn more about the design history of the *Essex* class, you should also read *Essex-Class Carriers* by Alan Raven (U.S. Naval Institute, 1988).

White, Alexander S. *Dauntless Marine: Joseph Sailer, Jr., Dive-Bombing Ace of Guadalcanal*. White Night Press, 9931 S. Park Circle, Fairfax Station, VA 22039. 1996. 173 pp. Ill. \$24.95.

Anyone familiar with the role that Marine Corps aviation played in the pivotal Guadalcanal campaign has seen the name of Major Joe Sailer, CO of VMSB-132. But aside from a few facts about his short combat career and how well he was regarded by his contemporaries, there has been little said about his life. *Dauntless Marine*—I like the play on words using the name of the Douglas SDB dive-bomber that Sailer's squadron flew—was written by a nephew who grew up hearing about his famous uncle's exploits.

Sailer joined the Marine Corps Reserve in 1930 and received his wings in July 1931. Working for the Sperry Corporation during early WW II, he flew several British aircraft while helping develop products for the war effort. He returned to the U.S. and was assigned as skipper of a

scout-bomber squadron which was sent to the Solomons in late October 1942. Flying his first missions in early November, he quickly gained a reputation as an energetic CO and highly capable aviator. He participated in 25 combat missions, seeing much action against the Japanese as they contested the American presence on Guadalcanal.

During his final mission on 7 December 1942, Sailer attacked a Japanese destroyer. As he pulled out of his dive, he was hit by antiaircraft fire, which apparently damaged his dive brakes. Sailer could not retract the big cheese-grater panels, and as he tried to set up for a water landing a Japanese float biplane attacked the struggling SBD. Sailer crashed into the sea, receiving the Navy Cross posthumously for his efforts.

This book carries several family photographs of Sailer, appendices give his combat log and a copy of the Navy Cross citation, and chapter notes amplify certain points in the narrative. A nice effort and a welcome addition to the literature of the Pacific war in the Solomons.

Rausa, Captain R., USNR (Ret.), ed. *The Best of Gramps*. Association of Naval Aviation, 5205 Leesburg Pike, Suite 200, Falls Church, VA 22041. 1996. Ill. 116 pp. \$24.95.

The creation of Captain Seth Warner, with graphic personification by artist Robert Osborn, Grampaw Pettibone is the irascible safety sage of Naval Aviation. The old codger's full name is P. S. (Post Script) Pettibone, but his rank is indeterminable. Sometimes, he speaks with the outraged fury of a CO whose junior officers have just dumped themselves and an expensive airplane in the drink. At other times, he has the warmth of a three-star admiral who loves to commend the junior aviators.

Making his home in the pages of *Naval Aviation News* since his "birth" in 1943, Grampaw Pettibone has shared countless stories of how to fly or *not* to fly and operate naval aircraft. Obviously, in that 50-plus-year period there would be plenty of material for a retrospective volume. And here it is.

Former *Naval Aviation News* editor Zip Rausa, now editor of *Wings of Gold* (the journal of the Association of Naval Aviation), has pulled together a veritable history of Naval Aviation mishaps and incidents. Complete with Osborn's unique drawings, which are far more than simple cartoons, the book begins with WW II prop planes and carries through the early jet period to the present day. This paperbound book will give everyone an enjoyable read. It also might bring back some memories—some good, some bad—for former and current Naval Aviators.